

SECTION 2.3

NORTH COAST RIVERS WATERSHED MANAGEMENT AREA

North Coast rivers not specifically included in other WMAs are included in this grouping. The major watersheds from the Oregon border south include the following listing. Those in bold have some information in this section:

- 2.3.1 Smith River
- 2.3.2 Bear River
- 2.3. **Mattole River**
- 2.3.4 **Ten Mile River**
- 2.3.5 **Noyo River**
- 2.3.6 **Big River**
- 2.3.7 **Albion River**
- 2.3.8 **Navarro River**
- 2.3.9 **Greenwood**, Elk, and Alder creeks
- 2.3.11 **Garcia River**
- 2.3.12 **Gualala River**

A citizens lawsuit against US Environmental Protection Agency produced a consent decree scheduling a number of north coast rivers for development of Clean Water Act section 303(d) “TMDLs” or Total Maximum Daily Loads, primarily for sediment and temperature. The Regional Water Board has accepted responsibility for developing and implementing waste reduction strategies in compliance with the Clean Water Act in the Mattole, Noyo, Big, Albion, Navarro, Garcia, and Gualala rivers within this WMA. In fiscal year 2000-2001, activities targeted the Garcia, Navarro, Mattole, Gualala, Big, and Noyo Rivers, as well as a Mendocino Coastal Watershed assessment that also included information on the Big and Albion Rivers. Descriptions of those activities appear in this section, developed to varying degrees depending on the level of activity completed in this past fiscal year.

The Ten Mile River, Albion River, Big River, Greenwood Creek, Elk Creek, and Alder Creek support an anadromous fishery including coho salmon which was listed on July 19, 1995 as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The Ten Mile River, Albion River, and Big River, pursuant to section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, are listed as impaired by excessive sediment loading associated with historic logging, overgrazing and road building.

Approximately 25% of the timber harvest in the Region occurs in Mendocino County that comprises the majority of this hydrologic area. The primary water quality issues are recovery of threatened and endangered species of coho salmon and steelhead trout. The potential impacts of timber harvesting on water supply for coastal communities of Elk, Gualala, and Fort Bragg have been raised. Forest herbicide application is an issue of concern.

Institutional Framework

The *Water Quality Control Plan for the North Coast Region* (Basin Plan) contains specific water quality objectives and implementation programs to protect and enhance identified beneficial uses of water. The over-arching regulatory provisions of the Basin Plan are the Action Plan for Logging, Construction and Associated Activities and the Nonpoint Source Action Plan.

The new North Coastal Watershed Assessment Program (NCWAP) is focussing on assessment in the following watersheds in this WMA: FY 2000-01—Gualala, Albion, and Big Rivers; FY 2001-02—Mattole River, FY 2002-03—coastal streams south of the Mattole River not identified above. This

multi-agency effort will gather existing data and collect new data to provide assessments of the watersheds. Those data and the assessments will be made available on an interactive computer database. Significant outreach to local landowners and agencies is an element of the program and will add to our understanding of issues in these watersheds.

Additionally, the new Surface Water Ambient Monitoring Program (SWAMP) has monitored sites in the WMA in FY 2000-01, leaving behind permanent stations to be sampled as an ongoing trend analysis. The actual station locations and timing are detailed in the individual watershed sections.

Summary of Activities

The overall emphasis in the WMAs is the inspection of timber harvest plans for implementation of the Forest Practice Rules and best management practices to ensure protection of water quality and beneficial uses. We are expanding our timber harvest program activities on private land in concert with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. The future development of TMDL waste reduction strategies for sediment will be another primary activity by Regional Board staff.

As mentioned above, the NCWAP will be a priority for these watersheds in the next three fiscal years. Significant staff resources and contract funds will be expended by the program in performing the watershed assessments.